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THE
NATURE, DESIGN,
AND
GENERAL RULES,
OF THE
United Societies

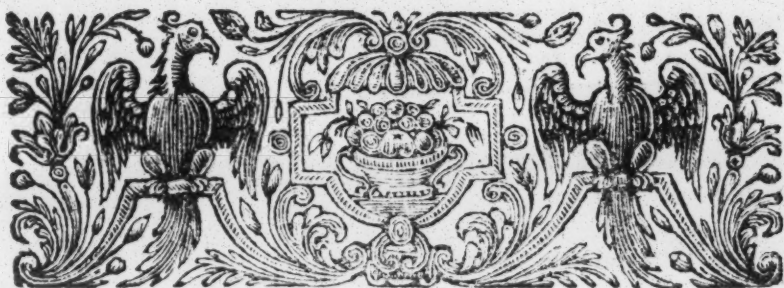
IN
*London, Bristol, Kingswood, and
Newcastle upon Tyne.*

THE FOURTH EDITION.

To which are subjoin'd,
The RULES of the BAND SOCIETIES.



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R U L E S, &c.



IN the latter End of the Year 1739, eight or ten Persons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of Sin, and earnestly groaning for Redemption. They desir'd (as did two or three more the next Day) that I would spend some Time with them in Prayer, and advise them how to flee from the Wrath to come; which they saw continually hanging over their Heads. That we might have more Time for this great Work, I appointed a Day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every Week, namely on *Thursday*, in the Evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their Number increased daily) I gave those Advices from Time to Time which I judg'd most needful for them; and we always concluded our Meeting with Prayer, suited to their several Necessities.

2. This was the Rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in *London*, and then in other Places. Such a Society is no other than “a Company of Men having the Form and seeking the Power of Godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the Word of Exhortation, and to watch over one another in

Love, that they may help each other to work out their Salvation."

3. That it may the more easily be discern'd, whether they are indeed working out their own Salvation, each Society is divided into smaller Companies, called *Classes*, according to their respective Places of Abode. There are about twelve Persons in every Class; one of whom is stiled *The Leader*. It is his Business,

I. To see each Person in his Class once a Week at least; in order

To enquire how their Souls prosper;

To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as Occasion may require;

To receive what they are willing to give, toward the Relief of the Poor.

II. To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the Society once a Week; in order

To inform the Minister of any that are Sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be re-proved;

To pay to the Stewards what they have receiv'd of their several Classes in the Week preceding; And

To shew their Account of what each Person has contributed.

4. There is one only Condition previously required, in those who desire Admission into these Societies, *a Desire to flee from the Wrath to come, to be saved from their Sins*: But, wherever this is really fix'd in the Soul, it will be shewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

First, By doing no Harm, by avoiding Evil in every

every kind ; especially, that which is most generally practis'd. Such is

The taking the Name of GOD in vain ;

The profaning the Day of the LORD, either by doing ordinary Work thereon, or by buying or selling :

Drunkenness, *Buying or selling Spirituous Liquors ; or drinking them*, (unless in Cases of extreme Necessity ;)

Fighting, Quarrelling, Brawling ; Going to Law, Returning Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing :
The using many Words in buying or selling :

The buying or selling uncustom'd Goods :

The giving or taking Things on Usury :

Uncharitable or unprofitable Conversation : Especially, *speaking Evil of Ministers or those in Authority :*

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us :

Doing what we know is not for the Glory of GOD : As

The putting on of Gold or costly Apparel.

The taking such Diversions as cannot be used in the Name of the LORD JESUS :

The Singing those Songs, or reading those Books, which do not tend to the Knowledge or Love of GOD :

Softness, and needless Self-indulgence :

Laying up Treasures upon Earth.

5. It is expected of all who continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Secondly, By doing Good, by being, in every kind, merciful after their Power: As they have Opportunity, doing Good of every possible Sort, and as far as is possible, to all Men:

To their Bodies, of the Ability which GOD giveth, by giving Food to the Hungry, by cloathing the Naked, by visiting or helping them that are Sick, or in Prison.

To their Souls, by instructing, *reproving* or exhorting all they have any intercourse with: Trampling under Foot that Enthusiastick Doctrine of Devils, that "we are not to do Good, unless *our Heart be free to it.*"

By doing good especially to them that are of the Household of Faith, or groaning so to be: Employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in Business; and so much the more, because the World will love its own, and them only.

By all possible *Diligence and Frugality*, that the Gospel be not blamed:

By running with Patience the Race that is set before them; *denying themselves, and taking up their Cross daily*; submitting to bear the Reproach of CHRIST, to be as the Filth and Offscouring of the World; and looking that Men should *say all manner of Evil of them falsely for their LORD's sake.*

6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the Ordinances of GOD: Such are

The publick Worship of GOD;

The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the LORD;

Family and Private Prayer;

Searching the Scriptures; and

Fasting or Abstinence.

7. These are the general Rules of our Societies ; all which we are taught of GOD to observe, even in his written Word, the only Rule, and the sufficient Rule both of our Faith and Practice: And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awaken'd Heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any one of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that Soul, as they that must give an Account. We will admonish him of the Error of his Ways: We will bear with him for a Season. But then if he repent not, he hath no more Place among us. We have deliver'd our own Souls.

JOHN WESLEY.
CHARLES WESLEY.

May 1, 1743.





RULES *of the* BAND SOCIETIES.

Drawn up Dec. 25, 1738.

THE Design of our Meeting is to obey that Command of God, *Confess your Faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*

To this End, we intend,

1. To meet once a Week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the Hour appointed, without some extraordinary Reason,
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the Hour with Singing or Prayer.
4. To speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly the true State of our Souls, with the Faults we have committed in Thought, Word or Deed, and the Temptations we have felt since our last Meeting.
5. To end every Meeting with Prayer, suited to the State of each Person present.
6. To desire some Person among us to speak *his* own State first, and then to ask the rest in order, as many and as searching Questions as may be, concerning their State, Sins and Temptations.

Some

Some of the Questions proposed to every one before *he* is admitted amongst us, may be to this Effect.

1. Have you the Forgiveness of your Sins?
2. Have you Peace with God, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST?
3. Have you the Witness of God's Spirit with your Spirit, that you are a Child of God?
4. Is the Love of God shed abroad in your Heart?
5. Has no Sin inward or outward Dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your Faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your Faults, and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire, that every one of us should tell you, from Time to Time, whatsoever is in *his* Heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire, that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the Quick, and search your Heart to the Bottom?
11. Is it your Desire and Design to be on this and all other Occasions entirely open, so as to speak every thing that is in your Heart, without Exception, without Disguise, and without Reserve?

RULES of the BAND SOCIETIES. II

Any of the preceeding Questions may be asked as often as Occasion offers.

The Five following at every Meeting.

1. What known Sin have you committed since our last Meeting?
2. What Temptations have you met with?
3. How was you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said or done, of which you doubt whether it be a Sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?



DIRECTIONS given to the BAND-SOCIETIES,

Dec. 25, 1744.

YOU are supposed to have the *Faith that overcometh the World*. To you therefore it is not grievous

I. Carefully to abstain from doing Evil; in particular,

I Neither

12 RULES of the BAND SOCIETIES.

I. Neither to *buy nor sell* any thing at all on the Lord's Day.

2. To taste no spirituous Liquor, *no Dram* of any kind, unless prescribed by a Physician.

3. To be *at a Word* both in buying and selling.

4. To *pawn nothing*, no, not to save Life.

5. Not to *mention the Fault* of any *behind his Back*, and to stop those short that do.

6. To wear no *needleless Ornaments*, such as Rings, Ear-rings, Necklaces, Lace, Ruffles.

7. To use no *needleless Self-indulgence*; such as taking Snuff, or Tobacco, unless prescribed by a Physician.

II. Zealously to maintain Good Works; in particular,

1. To *give Alms* of such Things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your Power.

2. To *reprove* all that sin in your Sight, and that in Love, and Meekness of Wisdom.

3. To be Patterns of *Diligence* and *Frugality*, of *Self-denial*, and taking up the Cross daily.

III. Constantly to attend on all the Ordinances of God; in particular,

1. To be at Church, and at the Lord's Table every Week, and at every Publick Meeting of the Bands.

2. To attend the Ministry of the Word every Morning, unless Distance, Business, or Sickness prevent.

3. To use Private Prayer every Day, and Family Prayer, if you are the Head of a Family.

4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate thereon, at every vacant Hour. And,

5. To observe as Days of Fasting or Abstinence, all *Fridays* in the Year.

F I N I S.

